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ABSTRACT

The British Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) is considering the inclusion of a question on race and ethnic origin in the 1981 census of Great Britain. This paper addresses the importance of obtaining statistical data on minority groups and examines some of the arguments and problems likely to be raised over the issue of including such a question in the census. Data showing discrimination in employment and housing in Britain are reviewed, and the inadequacy of available information for forming and implementing anti-discrimination policy is cited. Objections raised by politicians in opposition to the census question on race/ethnicity are reviewed and contested. It is pointed out that the alternatives suggested by the OPCS will not provide useful information. Some features of ethnicity, descent, and religion which might influence the wording of a census question are discussed. Policies of other countries in regard to census data on race, language, religion, and country of birth are briefly considered. A number of suggestions are offered on how questions which are simultaneously useful and non-discriminatory could be developed. A discussion of the use of the word "race" is appended to the paper. (GC)

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CENSUS 1981 - QUESTION ON RACIAL AND ETHNIC ORIGIN

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CENSUS 1981 - QUESTION ON RACIAL AND ETHNIC ORIGIN

INTRODUCTION

The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys is considering the inclusion of a question on race and ethnic origin in the 1981 Census. It is quite likely that, for the first time in a British census, the population will be legally obliged to provide the Government's Census Office with information on the "race or ethnic group" to which they "belong" or from which they are "descended". OPCS have devised such a question after a series of tests, but no decision as to whether it will be used in the census can be made until it has been laid before Parliament.

Several official government surveys already make classifications according to race or ethnic origin. In the General Household Survey, which has been operating since 1971, interviewers are told to classify people as "white" or "coloured" by observation of their skin colour alone. The Department of Employment's local exchanges classify people according to country of birth, and ethnic minority unemployment statistics have been published regularly in the Department of Employment Gazette for some time. Also, the Department of the Environment's current Housing and Dwelling Survey asks respondents to identify their ethnic origin from a list of twelve categories (including "mixed" and "other"). Unlike the census questions, interviewees are not legally obliged to answer this, yet it is claimed that the question has a "surprisingly small" refusal rate.

This paper looks at why the information is needed and at some of the arguments and problems which are likely to be raised during the future public debate on the inclusion of a question on racial or ethnic origin in the 1981 census.

1. WHY IS THE INFORMATION REQUIRED?

The main reason for having a national census is that society needs accurate information about its population in order to make rational and informed decisions in planning future policies. The national census provides, among other things, the only opportunity to collect comprehensive statistical information on particular groups at both a local and national level and to examine how their conditions compare with those of the population as a whole.

(a) THE POSITION OF ETHNIC MINORITIES IN SOCIETY

The main reason for having a question on racial or ethnic origins in the census is to obtain much needed statistical evidence about the position of those groups which are known to suffer the disadvantageous effects of racial discrimination in our society,

and to provide an information base for policy decisions. In recent years, the information that has been gathered on these groups by the Community Relations Commission, Political and Economic Planning, the Runnymede Trust, and others, has strongly indicated that in certain areas, particularly housing and employment, ethnic minority groups do face special problems because of discrimination. For example, the PEP national survey results first published in 1976 showed that the job levels of black and Asian men were substantially lower than those of white men, the widest gap being that between Pakistani men (58% in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs) and whites (18% in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs) and that minority group workers did not have inferior jobs purely because they tended to have inferior qualifications, since even amongst those educated to degree standard, 79% of white men were in professional or management jobs, compared to only 31% of black and Asian men. Ethnic minority workers were also shown to have lower earnings than whites, and to be more likely to be working shifts. Also, the pattern of housing tenure among the ethnic minorities was quite different from that of the white population; for example, on all measures of housing quality, the higher socio-economic groups tended to be better housed than the lower ones, but this did not account for the gap between the minorities and whites. Taking housing amenities as an example, within each socio-economic group, the black and Asian ethnic minorities had substantially fewer amenities than whites. So great were these differences, that the housing amenities enjoyed by West Indians and Asians in the professional and management group, were inferior to those enjoyed by the families of semi-skilled and unskilled white workers. These minorities also had substantially inferior housing to that of whites in the same tenure for each type of housing tenure and were also known to move off waiting lists and into council housing much more slowly than white applicants. For national government and local authorities to implement policies aimed at successfully alleviating disadvantages of this kind, it is essential to have clearly reliable factual information on which to base plans for the future.

The Government has produced legislation designed to prohibit discrimination against people on the grounds of their race or ethnic origin (and their sex). However, the PEP surveys demonstrate conclusively that the elimination of racial discrimination and disadvantage has not in the past and is unlikely in the future to be brought about by legislation alone. It is quite apparent that the elimination of racial discrimination and disadvantage is not going to be brought about for some time. Sound statistical data is needed, not only to introduce and enforce race relations legislation and policies, but

also to monitor their effectiveness.

Until comparatively recently, the collection of statistics on the basis of racial or ethnic origin was widely deplored in this country as being discriminatory in itself, and indeed, some people still regard it as being so.

Early policy assumptions on race were based on the hope that after immigrant families had settled in Britain for a generation or two, they would become integrated into the host society. Mr. Roy Jenkins, when he was Home Secretary, described this process as "not a flattening process of assimilation, but as equal opportunity accompanied by cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance".[2]

By 1975, when the Government White Paper, Racial Discrimination, was published, the mood had changed and there was growing concern that the children and grandchildren born here of immigrants, were not being integrated in this fashion:

> "The emerging evidence suggests that that early optimism may not be justified, that the problems with which we have to deal if we are to see genuine equality of opportunity for the coloured youngsters born and educated in this country may be larger in scale and more complex than had been initially supposed.
>
> The possibility has to be faced that there is at work in this country, as elsewhere in the world, the familiar cycle of cumulative disadvantage by which relatively low-paid or low-status jobs for the first generation of immigrants go hand in hand with poor and overcrowded living conditions and a depressed environment. If, for example, job opportunities, educational facilities, housing and environmental conditions are all poor, the next generation will grow up less well-equipped to deal with the difficulties facing them. The wheel then comes full circle, as the second generation find themselves trapped in poor jobs and poor housing. If, at each stage of this process, an element of racial discrimination enters in, then an entire group of people are launched on a vicious downward spiral of deprivation. They may share each of the disadvantages with some other deprived group in society; but

few other groups in society display all their accumulated disadvantages."[3]

Since that time, support for the collection of statistics on ethnic minorities has been growing, and there has recently been a gradual shift in opinion on the part of some concerned bodies to the extent that the new Commission for Racial Equality, set up under the Race Relations Act, 1976, now strongly supports the idea of ethnic record keeping. Several local authority housing departments have begun to keep ethnic minority records on their waiting lists of prospective tenants and the Department of Education and Science is seriously considering collecting statistics on children of ethnic minority families as it once did for immigrant children.

These moves are a direct result of research findings which have clearly shown the need for such statistics. For example, the Cullingworth Report, Council Housing, Purposes, and Priorities, published in 1969, stated "records should be kept and used... to establish how many people are applying for council houses, how many are getting them, where they are getting them, and what type and quality of house they are obtaining. The resultant statistics will raise questions which will need investigation". Five years after this, the Runnymede Trust found from the 1971 census data, that concentrations of New Commonwealth tenants were to be found in the very worst housing estates administered by the GLC and several London boroughs.[4] These findings were later confirmed by the GLC[5], and by PEP[6]. The Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, in their Report on Housing, published in 1971, argued in favour of ethnic record keeping and the Government replied in its Observations, "The Government agrees that sensible and confidential record-keeping about the housing of coloured people should be encouraged in appropriate areas... Records should be kept and statistics produced, but not for their own sake, it is important that any information released should be properly explained."

In 1974, the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration Report on Employment[8] also accepted the need for keeping records on ethnic minorities, stating that policies of equal opportunity must be monitored in some way if they are to be effective. The Committee noted that the Race Relations Board had drawn up a paper, Equal Opportunity in Employment,[9] which had emphasised that factual information on ethnic minority workers was needed before firms could be persuaded to take an active part in promoting equal opportunity and in checking that the distribution of coloured workers was not unfairly subject to discrimination. In 1975, in its Report on the Organisation of Race Relations Administration,[10] the Select Committee called for monitoring in the Civil

Service, with the setting up of a special Equal Opportunity of Employment Unit to record the recruitment of minority group workers and women in the various Government Departments.

In education, the Commission for Racial Equality, the Inner London Education Authority and the National Union of Teachers, have all publicly stated in 1977, that they are in favour of ethnic minority record-keeping in schools. The Department of Education and Science did collect statistics on numbers of immigrant children between 1966 and 1973 but then stopped because so many coloured children in school were born here and were not being counted under this system. The provisions of Section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966, were geared to the special needs of immigrant children as distinct from those children born here of immigrant parents, and since no statistics are kept on the latter, policies concerned with their special needs have to be made without the basic information. The DES is now considering ways of resolving the problem by means of record-keeping. Many ethnic minority children need help with their English and many more, since Britain's acceptance in 1977 of the EEC directive on mother-tongue teaching may in the future be provided by local education authorities with teaching / in their first language. This directive is due to come into force in 1981 and as yet there is no clear information as to whereor how big these linguistic minorities are.

If OPCS can construct a question on ethnicity for the census which would enable the Government and local authorities to identify distinct groups in the community who have specific and identifiable needs, and to monitor the progress of ethnic minorities in employment, housing and other areas, for the purpose of formulating and promoting policies to counter disadvantage caused by discrimination, then there will be definite advantages in including such a question in the census.

There is of course, the danger that present demands for more accurate information before policy decisions can be taken are merely a stalling technique designed to put off the moment when Government and local authorities may have to make difficult political decisions on what, if anything, they are prepared to do, to deal with the problems facing ethnic minorities.

However, given the political will, there is still the need for accurate information if policies are to be relevant and properly informed. If this information is to be made available, it is obviously essential that the census question should be technically capable of obtaining it.

(a) BRITAIN AS A MULTI-RACIAL SOCIETY

Britain has for some considerable time been a country whose population has been made up of many different ethnic mixes, but because of a long period of comparative social and political stability, the British have tended to think of themselves as a fairly homogenous nation.[11] This is a false assumption. Over the last century, there has been constant population movement, both into and out of the country, and it would be a mistake to assume that the present ethnic composition of the population will remain constant. Just as social historians in this country have encountered extreme difficulties in mapping out the migration and settlement patterns of migrants to Britain in the previous century, future social historians may find themselves similarly handicapped by the lack of accurate and reliable government statistics on today's ethnic minorities, unless future censuses are to include a question on racial and ethnic origin.

There is no way of knowing at the present time to what extent racial and ethnic mixing will or will not take place over the coming decades or to what extent present ethnic minorities will disperse or realign themselves. The entry of Britain into the Common Market and the acceptance of the EEC policy of freedom of movement, may eventually make a marked change in the ethnic composition of the British population. Social groups are not static or permanent, but are in a state of constant change. If the census is to measure change in the position of ethnic minorities over time, then, any question on race and ethnicity must not be limited to the problems and particular ethnic minority groups of the present but be capable of extracting the relevant comparable information across future decades. It is quite possible that in the next century, many members of our contemporary ethnic minorities will have merged with the majority population and that there will be quite different ethnic minority groups, e.g., new pools of migrant labour coming in from abroad, especially the Southern Mediterranean countries, or new refugees from political persecution, etc.

(c) INADEQUACY OF DATA PROVIDED BY THE 1971 CENSUS

The last census, in 1971, asked for the first time in this country, a question on birthplaces of parents. From this, estimates were made of the numbers of people from New Commonwealth countries (the so-called "coloured" population). However, even this comparatively straightforward question, turned out to be unsatisfactory in many ways.

Some people did not know where their parents were born and some coloured people were not identified as such, because their parents were born in Britain. For instance, there are communities of West Indian origin in most of Britain's major ports, (e.g. Merseyside or Cardiff) whose families have been settled here for several generations, who did not appear as "coloured" in the last census.[12] This difficulty will be intensified in future censuses. Also, it was very difficult to separate out those "white" people born overseas of British-born parents. This is why OPCS has been looking for a more direct and accurate method of obtaining information on ethnic minorities.

2. OPPOSITION TO THE QUESTION ON RACIAL AND ETHNIC ORIGIN

OPCS has been working on constructing its proposed question for the past two years, putting it through a series of rigorous technical tests, the last of which took place in Slough in April 1978. OPCS, however, appears to have concentrated on technical perfection rather than the relevance of the categories or their usefulness for policy-makers. So far, the discussion has been limited to those immediately concerned with the research methodology of census surveys and the wider public is only just beginning to become involved. The issue is likely to be highly controversial. Several politicians have already expressed concern at the introduction of such a question and at least some members of the ethnic minority communities are concerned about it. Opposition is based on the following grounds:

(a) That it is racist and discriminatory to attempt to classify people according to their skin colour or ethnic origins. The people who take this view would not be opposed to the general purpose of a census in principle, but would oppose the particular question on racial and ethnic origins since it would legally oblige individuals to provide information about themselves on the basis of social divisions which many people believe should not exist. It is interesting that unlike most other European countries, Britain does not include a question on religion in the census because it has been regarded as a gross intrusion of privacy (It was last asked in the very first national census of 1801). In the past, the usual census questions on housing, employment, etc., have not raised ethical or moral problems, because although asking for personal details, the matters raised were concerned with straightforward and practical details to which comparatively little, if any social stigma is attached.

(b) The other source of opposition is likely to be that section of the population which believes that there should be no extensive, obligatory, national census survey form at all. Strong opposition along these lines, was expressed against the 1971 census. There is growing concern that the machinery of modern government demands ever-increasing amounts of personal information and that modern technology now provides the government with the means to create a national data bank, with files on every citizen in the UK, if it so decides.

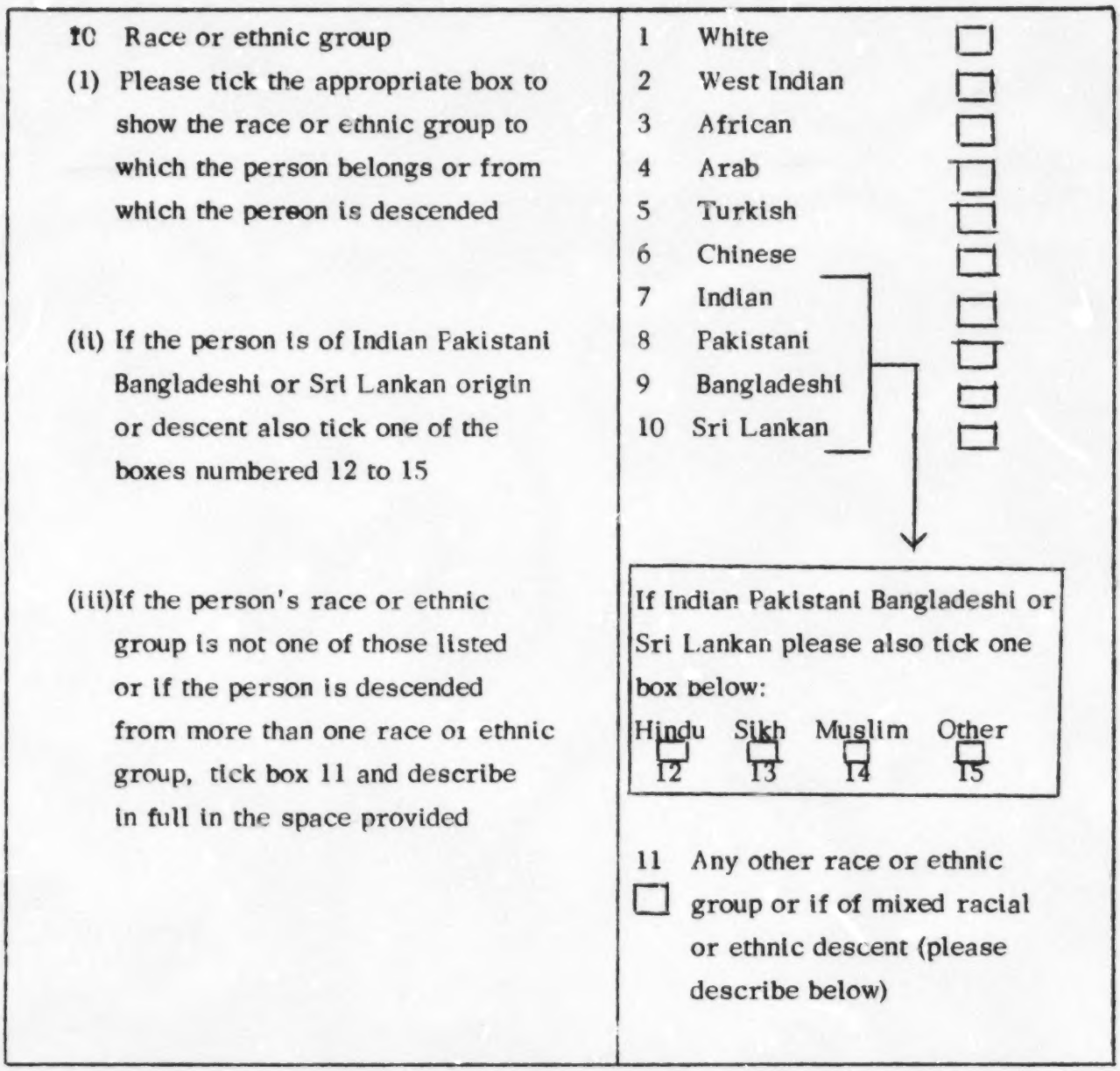
Government departments, local authorities, and the police, already hold between them, enough information to compile a comprehensive profile of every UK citizen. The central government has declared that it has no intention of linking those data banks now held separately, but there is no guarantee that this will not happen in the future. In Patricia Hewitt's book, The Information Gatherers, published in 1977 by the National Council for Civil Liberties, she described how, in 1971, William Whitelaw, MP, gave a public undertaking that "information about individual people or families will under no circumstances be released to any authority outside the census organisation itself" (Hansard 20 April 1971). Despite this promise, OPCS undertook, on behalf of the DHSS, a follow-up survey of ex-nurses, whose names and addresses were obtained from the individual census returns. A question on race and ethnic origin would gather just one more piece of information, which could undermine the individual's right to privacy. NCCL believes that a legally compulsory questionnaire asking for details of name, date of birth, sex, and usual place of residence is all that is necessary for a census, with a separate anonymous questionnaire to cover all the other questions OPCS would like to ask. The second questionnaire would be voluntary, but NCCL believes that the very fact of anonymity would make people more willing to truthfully complete questions on a wider range of topics. NCCL has also expressed concern about the recruitment and selection of census enumerators. In the 1971 census, more people complained about enumerators, than any other aspect of the census. It became apparent, that an enumerator could discover information in the course of the census, which would be useful in his or her full-time occupation, e.g., in a local authority rating department. So NCCL is arguing that not only should enumerators have to make a declaration of confidentiality, but also that certain groups of public officials (immigration officials, policemen, tax inspectors, some local government officers, and customs and excise officials) and sales representatives and other business people should not be eligible for employment as enumerators.

(c) Given the uneasy state of race relations in Britain at the moment, and the wide publicity given to policies of the National Front and repatriation, there is a

fear, particularly among ethnic minority communities themselves, that the information on race obtained from the census might in the future be misused.

3. THE PROPOSED QUESTION

The following is the census question on race and ethnic group, as devised by OPCS, proposed for the 1981 census form.


10 Race or ethnic group
(i) Please tick the appropriate box to show the race or ethnic group to which the person belongs or from which the person is descended
(ii) If the person is of Indian Pakistani Bangladeshi or Sri Lankan origin or descent also tick one of the boxes numbered 12 to 15
(iii) If the person's race or ethnic group is not one of those listed or if the person is descended from more than one race or ethnic group, tick box 11 and describe in full in the space provided
1 White
2 West Indian
3 African
4 Arab
5 Turkish
6 Chinese
7 Indian
8 Pakistani
9 Bangladeshi
10 Sri Lankan
If Indian Pakistani Bangladeshi or Sri Lankan please also tick one box below:
Hindu 12
Sikh 13
Muslim 14
Other 15
11 Any other race or ethnic group or if of mixed racial or ethnic descent (please describe below)

The census will also ask for country of birth and, for the first time in Britain, for information which will enable OPCS to identify a respondent's nationality. The question on nationality will probably be as follows:

If the person was not born in the United Kingdom (that is England or Wales or Scotland or Northern Ireland) or the Republic of Ireland.

(a) has the person been naturalised or registered as a citizen of the United Kingdom

Yes ☐

No ☐

If 'NO'

(b) Write the name of the country which issued the passport on which the person entered the United Kingdom.

Answers to this question will enable OPCS to identify any numerically large communities of, for example, Japanese, French, or German nationals living in the country. This is a fairly straightforward, easily-answered question and is not expected to be controversial. Most other countries in the world use a question on nationality in their censuses to ascertain the numbers and geographical distribution of foreign nationals living in their territory. It asks a direct question on a point of fact, unlike the question on racial or ethnic group.

The census office has aimed at developing a question which can combine "acceptability with accuracy", that is, one which will be easily understood, inoffensive to the minorities concerned, and yet capable of recording accurately the necessary information. The census question which has emerged from the OPCS tests, looks to the outsider, a strange, illogical muddle. According to John Boreham, the Deputy Director of the Central Statistical Office, "The question does look funny and must seem extraordinary to any logician or philosopher. The only defence is, it works".[13] However, it has not yet been made clear, how it works, or why. Since the main justification for including the question is not that it will be a mere head-counting of non-whites, but that the gathering of such information will help policy analysts, local government, etc., to identify distinct groups in the population with specific needs, and to devise policies to address those needs. To be useful, the census question must be able to identify these groups both in the present and in the future, so that changes in their structure and situation and the success of policies can be measured.

This, the question in its present form, will not be able to do . It contains a confusion of different categorisations - skin colour, geographical origin, ethnicity, and religion, based apparently on the underlying assumption that the population can be satisfactorily divided into "white" and 'the rest". It is nowhere made clear exactly what the census office means by "race" or by "ethnic group". OPCS has stated that its categories are all really ethnic groups and that they are using the word "race" as well as "ethnic" because race is in "common currency". The fusing together of two words which do in fact have their own precise and very different meanings seems bound to result in misunderstandings.

RACE

The census office's use of the concept of race does not reflect a clear understanding of the term. The idea of a typology of races which is fixed and unchanging is now widely regarded as obsolete, because social and geographical isolation of populations can no longer be maintained. "Racial" classification simply does not allow in the long term for demographic changes and "racial" mixing, whereas "ethnic" groupings appear to be far more flexible categories which do provide some allowance for social change. (See Appendix 11)

ETHNIC GROUPS

An ethnic group is one bound together by common social features, for instance, a shared history and culture, language and religion. OPCS's question does not make clear what is meant by "ethnic origin" nor does it attempt to distinguish ethnicity from nationality or birth-place. For example, no distinctions are allowed for West Indians from the different Caribbean Islands or for the different ethnic groups from those islands (West Indians are of mixed African, European, Chinese, and Indian descent); nor again between different African ethnic groups, of which there are many. "Africans" cannot be regarded as an ethnic group. For instance, a black man from, say, Rhodesia is unlikely to have much in common with a Moroccan. Indeed many people will face difficulties in fitting themselves into this classification system; Chileans or Greek Cypriots may classify themselves as "white" or "other" and "describe" themselves, or non-black Africans may classify themselves as "Indian", "African" or "other, and "describe" themselves as "Kenyan Asian", "British Ugandan", or "Ugandan Asian". Obviously there has to be a cut-off point in the list of ethnic minorities to be identified in the census, but several of the broad categories used in this particular question would be of no use at all. In the proposed question, Turks are classified (box 5) separately, yet according to the 1971 census, there were far larger groups of Germans, Italians, Poles, Spaniards, and Russians living here; all of whom could classify themselves as "white" or "other", and of course Turks in this country can either be "Turkish" or "other" - Turkish Cypriots.

A further problem, is that the census question does not allow for the feelings of those immigrant parents who wish to regard their children as "British". It is quite possible that many families who have migrated to Britain and settled here, in some cases for several generations, may now or in the future no longer wish to be regarded as "West Indian" or "Indian" or whatever, but as "British". If the census question is about "ethnicity" and not a crude "racial" classification for the purpose of a head count, then there should be a category which allows for this.

Unless one believes that only non-whites can be "ethnic", no attempt whatsoever has been made to distinguish between white ethnic groups (e.g. Americans, whites from different parts of Africa, the old Commonwealth, etc.) This is in contrast to the Canadian census question on ethnicity, and raises several points. Firstly, the question appears to assume that all whites are a homogenous ethnic group, and secondly, the way the question is set out may give offence to people who are not white, because it clearly divides the population along the lines of colour. For the purposes of social policy, there seems to be little use in simply counting the white population since white ethnic groups which may have special needs will not be differentiated.

"BELONGING TO OR DESCENDED FROM"

The proposed question asks which group "the person belongs to or from which the person is descended" and assumes that these mean the same thing. There are in all likelihood, many people in this country and will continue to be, of West Indian, African, Chinese, or Vietnamese "descent" who have "belonged" to white families by adoption.

RELIGION

Another problem is the confusion between "ethnic" and "religious" groups. It would be discriminatory to ask only categories 7, 8, 9, and 10 (people from the Indian sub-continent) to answer a question on religion, when no-else is legally compelled to do so. There may be sizeable communities of people of Christian denominations from the Indian sub-continent which will be lost in the 11 box (other); for example, Roman Catholic Goans, and many people who tick in the first six categories may wonder why they are not asked about their religions, especially the communities of Muslims from outside the Indian sub-continent.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ESTABLISHING A GOOD PRECEDENT IN THE 1981 CENSUS

The census must be able to provide a "benchmark" if it is to have any use. It must be remembered that there may be other different ethnic minorities here in the future. New immigrants generally appear in the "country of birth" section, but there is a problem of recording descendants born here. It is vital, if it is decided to record ethnicity at all, that useful and lasting rules and precedents are set now in the 1981 census. If the question has to be changed for every census to cover each different range of possibilities, accurate comparability will not be achieved. There are signs that this problem will not become any easier. The numbers of the population who will classify themselves as being of mixed racial or ethnic descent are likely to increase faster and the possible permutations are endless.

4. The Experience of other countries

Several other countries include questions on race and ethnicity in their censuses. Details of the questions asked on country of birth, nationality or citizenship, religion, race, ethnic origin and language, derived from the census surveys in fourteen different countries are given in the Appendix, page 15.

A brief look at census surveys in these countries, shows that, whilst all use a very similar format and are basically looking for the same information, many have extraneous questions, which reflect the particular political, social, or economic concerns and problems of the country at the time of the census. These can vary as widely as asking, 'Were you in Berlin in the years immediately after World War II?" to, "How many poultry fowl does your household stock?"

The inclusion of a question on race and ethnicity is an indication of the political and social significance attached to the issue in that country. In this, Britain is no exception. However, the actual use to which the information obtained is used, may vary widely, depending on the political persuasion of the country concerned. To take two extreme examples, South Africa and New Zealand: Both have had extensive questions on race and ethnic origin in their census surveys for most of this century, but each state has put its own very different emphasis on the purpose of these questions. In South Africa, the aim of the state is to promote apartheid and census information is used directly to assist in state planning and policy on this matter. On the other hand, New Zealand as a state, has never openly advocated racial segregation and today, has a stated commitment to promoting a multi-ethnic society. It uses the census information to measure how effective the state has been and where best it can use its resources and influence to improve the position of disadvantaged minorities.

Many countries which do not ask questions on race and ethnicity in their censuses, do however, keep national statistics on their ethnic minorities, by other means, for instance, by using immigration and emigration figures, records for work-permit and residence-permit holders, etc. Canada and New Zealand are the two best examples of countries which use the census to gather fairly detailed information about their ethnic minorities. Since they have both been collecting this sort of information for some time now, it is likely they have already faced the technical problems which are currently being encountered by OPCS in devising their question on race and ethnic group.

The most striking differences between the approach of these countries and that of

Britain, is that they both long ago stopped using the word "race" in the census as being obsolete and they have both abandoned categorisations based on skin colour alone. In New Zealand, "European" is used as an ethnic category into which most whites fall: in Canada, a much wider series of ethnic categories is given, with detailed explanations on the census form, of what is intended by the term "ethnic origin" as opposed to birthplace or nationality. Of the census questionnaires examined, only those of South Africa and the United States used a "racial" classification system, based on skin colour. Canada and New Zealand both also use a separate question for religious affiliation, which covers everyone and is therefore not discriminatory.

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. If OPCS wants information about the ethnic groups that are the largest in numerical terms and whose customs, language, and cultural patterns are significantly different from the majority population, thus requiring special policies in say, education, health, and welfare, then it is ethnicity they need to know about and not skin colour. If it is also necessary to use the census to monitor the effects of legislation designed to eliminate discrimination in this country, especially in employment and housing, then skin colour is important, because so many of Britain's ethnic minorities are distinguished by having darker skin and are discriminated against because of it. The problems involved in asking people about their skin colour are immense and are not made any simpler by trying to pretend biological differences are the same as cultural ones. There appear to be two possible alternatives here; the census office could either

(a) recognise the fact that there is, if not already, certainly int the future, going to be a sizeable non-white population that is British ethnically and adjust its present question accordingly or it could (b) ask a separate question directly on skin colour.

The former alternative would seem to be more practical and less controversial, since the problems involved in asking a question on colour itself would be vast. A possible way round this would be to offer categories like Black British, Asian British, Cypriot British, etc., which allow people born here to identify their ethnic origins along with their claim to being British. This would be similar to the successful American usage of Black American, Afro-American, etc.

2. A question on first languages or mother tongues would be very useful. OPCS tested a question on "language used in the home" in a survey amongst minority groups in the summer of 1976 and found that many respondents thought the question was an enquiry about the number of languages they could speak, rather than about their mother-

tongue. Many other countries include such a question in their censuses, apparently without encountering serious difficulties. Perhaps one could be devised on the basis of the wording of the Canadian question.

3. Since the range of ethnic minorities in Britain is so wide and it would be impractical to cover all possibilities on the census form, it would be useful to use the 1971 census figures as a basis for deciding which were the most important ethnic minorities and to add to these the minorities known to have entered the country since 1971. It is also important to remember, that although some ethnic groups may be numerically small in terms of the overall national population, their concentration in certain areas can make them very significant there, e.g., Greek and Turkish Cypriots in Haringey, Moroccans in Paddington, Chinese in certain parts of Liverpool, etc.

4. The inclusion of Gypsies as an ethnic group should be considered. The Cripps Report[15] last year could only guess at the numbers of Gypsies living in Britain, whilst at the same time, making considerable demands on local authorities to improve site provisions for them.

5. If it is necessary to have a question on religious affiliation because it overlaps with ethnicity in some cases (Sikhs, Hindus, Moslems, etc.) then there should be a direct question on religion for everyone in order that the census should not appear to be discriminatory or to be making the a priori assumption that only people from the Indian sub-continent belong to these particular faiths.

6. If the aim of the question is to provide relevent statistical data which will inform policy decisions concerning Britains ethnic minority groups, then it must be a question constructed for that purpose and allowing for technical considerations, one which gathers only directly useful information. Although OPCS's proposed question may provide for a head-count of non-white people living here, it will not provide the necessary statistical data, nor take into account many of the needs and problems outlined in this paper.

NOTES

1. D J Smith Racial Disadvantage in Britain. The Political and Economic Planning Report. Penguin 1977

2. Address given by the Rt Hon Roy Jenkins MP on 23 May 1966 (London NCCI 1966).

3. Racial Discrimination, Cmnd. 6234, HMSO, 1975

4. Runnymede Trust Research Staff, Race and Council Housing in London, Runnymede Trust, 1975.

5. John Parker and Keith Dugmore, Colour and the Allocation of GLC Housing, Research Report 21 GLC 1976

6. David Smith and Anne Whalley, Racial Minorities and Public Housing, PEP, 1975.

7. Race Relations and Housing. Observation on the Report on Housing of the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, Cmnd 6232, HMSO 1975

8. Report of the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, Housing, HMSO, 1971

9. Race Relations Board, Equal Opportunity in Employment, RRB, 1974.

10. Report of the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, Organisation of Race Relations Administration, HMSO, 1975.

11. Allowing for internal nationalist sentiments among the Welsh, Scots and Irish.

12. James Walvin, Black and White, The Negro and English Society 1555 - 1945, Allen Lane, Penguin Press, 1973.

13. Speaking at a meeting of the Census Research Group on 16 December 1971 at the County Hall, London SE1

14. W. E. B. DuBois. devised this classification system.

15. Cripps Report, Accommodation for Gypsies, DOE Welsh Office, HMSO, 1976

APPENDIX I

Census Surveys in Other Countries

Australia	Ireland	South Africa
Belgium	Italy	Sweden
Canada	Luxembourg	U.S.A.
Denmark	Netherlands	West Germany
France	New Zealand	

a) Country of birth

This question was on all the questionnaires. Some countries also asked for parents' birthplaces (Australia, United States) and the Canadian one asked for further details about the actual region, district or county of birth. Some countries also asked for the period of residence (Canada, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand and France).

b) Nationality or citizenship

All the censuses included this question except the Irish and Italian ones. Some countries asked how the nationality was acquired (Belgium, France, Netherlands, United States) and France asked about previous nationality.

c) Religion

Several countries had a question on religion (Australia, Canada, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, South Africa, West Germany) but for some, an answer was not compulsory (Australia, France, Ireland, New Zealand).

d) Race

None of the European countries had a question on this: only Australia, South Africa and the United States. The Australian census has always used a question on race. The information gathered is of special interest to the Commonwealth and State Authorities for Aboriginal Affairs. The forms are completed by interviewers and the particular question is: "What is the person's racial origin?" (If of mixed origin, indicate the one to which he considers himself to belong) (Tick one box and give one origin only)

- ☐ European origin
- ☐ Aboriginal origin
- ☐ Torres Strait Islander origin
- ☐ Other - give one only

Between 1933 and 1961 the question on race was put rather differently. The categories weee structured in this way -

1. European
2. Other - e.g. Aboriginal, Chinese, Negro, Afghan, etc. or Half-Caste e.g. Aboriginal H.C., Chinese H.C., etc.

In 1966 this format was altered because it was found to provide very imprecise information (non-white people very often exaggerated their degree of "whiteness" and the term 'Half-Caste' became officially regarded as offensive). The format for 1966 was -

1. European

   Other - e.g. Aboriginal, Chinese, Indian, Japanese, etc., or mixed descent - e.g. ½ European and ½ Chinese, 3/4 Aboriginal and ¼ European etc.

This was hardly an improvement. It was found to be just as unsuccessful for the same reasons. Many non-whites registered as what they wished to be rather than as what they were. In 1971, it was decided to allow them to do this anyway, without questioning their response, though technically, an Aboriginal is now someone who is "½ or more pure Aborigine". In 1967, the repeal of Section 127 of the Constitution made it no longer necessary to identify Aborigines in the census surveys, but this is still done. The main reason for this is claimed to be that the information obtained is very useful for those agencies which promote the welfare and combat the relative deprivation of the Aborigines. A special separate census report is issued on them, which does contain a mass of useful information. (Also there is a special note on the census form itself, explaining the general purpose of a census and explaining that information is needed on Aborigines and immigrants to help provide necessary resources and facilities for them). The South African census uses separate forms for "whites and coloureds" and "natives". The first form asks

Race of head of household

- ☐ White (European)
- ☐ Indian
- ☐ Chinese
- ☐ Japanese
- ☐ Cape Malay
- ☐ Cape Coloured etc.

and the second, used for "natives", asks extensive questions about membership of tribes, regional affiliations, etc.

There were extensive notes to enumerators, explaining the basis of racial classifications. This is a particularly interesting one and demonstrates just how absurd racial classification can become:

"(1) White (the term 'European' will no longer be used) A white person is now defined as a person who in appearance obviously is and who is generally accepted as a white person, but does not include a person who, although in appearance obviously a white person, is generally accepted as a coloured person".

The United States Census question is on "color or Race". Enumerators were asked to complete this section by observation. The categories were

White/Negro/Indian/Other/Mixed

The "white" category was to include Mexicans, Latin Americans, Southern Europeans etc.

The U.S. census is particularly vast and apart from the specific question on race, the classifications appear elsewhere in other questions, e.g., in the housing census form.

In past censuses, there have been special census forms for Indian Reservations and as with the Aborigines in Australia, this information was documented separately for the use by the Government department responsible for Red Indian affairs. Indians were asked to supply the following extra information:

1. Tribe
2. Clan
3. Degree of Indian blood - Full/$\frac{1}{2}$/$\frac{1}{4}$ less than $\frac{1}{4}$
4. Languages - ability to read/write/speak English
   ability to read/write/speak any other language
5. Type of house or dwelling - 6 categories
   Type of floor - 3 categories
6. Question on participation in any Native Indian Ceremonies during the previous year -
   Attended?
   Participated?
   Neither?

e) Ethnic origin

Only two countries used this term in their census forms - Canada and New Zealand. Canada used the following categories: English, French, German, Irish, Italian, Jewish, Native Indian, Netherlands, Norwegian, Polish, Scottish, Ukrainian, Other (specify).

Information provided on the census form stresses that "origin" is not to be confused with mother-tongue or nationality/citizenship - it "refers to cultural group (sometimes erroneously called racial group)". Origin was to be traced through the father if he was born in Canada, then through his ancestry - but if the interviewee insisted that he was "North American" or "Canadian" then this could be entered. For people of mixed Indian and white descent, those on reserves were to be classified as "native Indians" those not on reserves were to have their line of origin traced through the father and a category of "unknown" was allowed for those who really did not have the necessary information about their ancestry. The New Zealand census has been gathering information on "race" since 1916 but in 1971 changed to the use of the term "ethnic origin". The same information was gathered but the New Zealand Government decided to use the "more correct and less offensive" term in future, throughout all its legislation, literature, and publications, etc. Two special census reports on this area are published with the main reports: one devoted to ethnic minorities and the other specifically to the Moari population.

The categories used are:
European (all white and less than ½ Moari)
Moari (all ½ or more Moari)
Others - Non-Moari Polynesian
Fijian
Chinese
Indian
Syrian
Lebanese
Arab
"others of mixed blood" - on this one enumerators were advised to accept the respondents claims at face value.

The questionnaires and published reports contain a great deal of useful information on these groups, which can be used for comparison across the decades since 1916. One of the main areas of emphasis is on mixed marriages, the extent of racial mixing etc.

f) Language

Several countries included a question on language (Canada, Ireland, South Africa). Canada's question was concerned with the mother tongue or first language. The first part was for adults and school children, with three possible answers - French/English/Both - but the second part was for infants only and no "Both" category was allowed.

There was also a specific question "What is the language you spoke first in childhood and still understand?" Sixteen languages were listed and an "other" category. The Irish census has recently begun to include a specific question on knowledge of the Irish Language. The four categories used for the answer are English/Irish/Both/English and reading ability in Irish but no speaking ability in Irish. The South African census asked a question on "the language most commonly spoken by each person at home" and for an indication of "ability to speak English plus Afrikaans/English only/Afrikaans only/Neither. Form C2 for black Africans asked a specific question on mother tongue giving twelve categories with twenty-five sub-divisions. It also asked about literacy and speaking ability in Native Language/English/Afrikaans.

APPENDIX II

The Use of the Word 'Race'

Prior to the 1950's, it was quite usual to speak of the "races of man", usually referring to geographical groups with different skin colours and hair textures, etc. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many racial classification systems were devised by anthropologists, biologists, and others. The following is a typical example of one attempt to divide mankind into eight "major races":-

Slavs of Eastern Europe
Teutons of Middle Europe
English of Britain and America
Romance Nations of Southern & Western Europe
Negroes of Africa and America
Semitic peoples of Western Asia & Northern Africa
Hindus of Central Asia
Mongolians of Eastern Asia [14]

All of these would then be subdivided into "minor race groups" and then sub-divided again endlessly.

However, since the 1950's, man's biological understanding of human life has progressed to the extent that theories and doctrines about race based on universal classification systems, are now considered defunct. The advances made by geneticists are the most relevant here. Very briefly, genes are now seen as the key to understanding the inheritance of "racial" characteristics. Geneticists have stressed the point that all human beings share a vast number of genes in common, although various populations differ as to the frequency of certain genes. For instance, a child does not inherit a "set package" of characteristics, half from each parent as was previously imagined (hence the terms "half-caste", 'half-blood", "quarter-blood", and so on, as if different "races" had different "bloods", which could be mixed in portions), but rather his genetic make-up will be drawn from a wide range of possible combinations from the inherited gene pool of the society in which his family lives, and in the modern world it is extremely unlikely that any gene pool will be isolated or exclusive. Thus, there are no "pure races", in the biological sense left in the world. The pure or true "race" was a population group which retained a separate gene pool, because of usually geographical, but sometimes social isolation. For example, Australian Aborigines existed as a true race until comparatively recently, because they mated and bred amongst themselves and developed an exclusive culture,

inhabiting an island continent. On the other hand, a group like the Jews, for instance, is not true race because although it has a common cultural pool of inheritance, it does not have a common pool of genetic inheritance. In the modern world, there are increasingly fewer isolated populations with separate racial inheritances. Populations in Latin America, the United States, the West Indies, and elsewhere have all clearly shown that racial characteristics such as colour are unlikely to remain stable over many generations and that the continued existence of races is dependent upon social or geographical isolation. In spite of this knowledge, the old concept of race has continued to underpin much contemporary discussion about racial differences, as controversies like the "race and I.Q. debate" provoked by Jensen, . and Eysenck have demonstrated.

List of Runnymede Trust publications based on the 1971 census material

G B Gillian Lomas	Census 1971: The Coloured Population of Great Britain November 1972
K Campbell-Platt	The Coloured Population of Great Britain April 1974 A Briefing Paper.
	Linguistic Minorities in Britain February 1976 A Briefing Paper
G B Gillian Lomas and E M Monck	Census 1971 - The Coloured Population of Great Britain: A Comparative Study of Coloured Households in Four County Boroughs September 1975
	Census 1971 - The Coloured Population of Great Britain: A Comparative Study of Coloured Households in Four County Boroughs October 1975 A Briefing Paper summarising the above report.
G B Gillian Lomas and E M Monck	The Coloured Population of Great Britain. Employment and Economic Activity 1971 November 1977